6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

is manifest, even at the present time, in the rural life of eastern Georgia, where the primitive methods of tillage require five or six, or even more, pairs of oxen and many workmen. Instead of the joint family, which has now disappeared, economic groups are formed for the joint execution of field work, in which the prerogatives and duties of every participant are clearly defined.

As we mentioned in the beginning, group ownership among the Georgian Highlanders is manifested in the ownership of pasture ground, forests, and church property.

Pasture grounds are owned by every community jointly, and their boundaries are clearly defined and fixed. The Pshavs, who possess large flocks of sheep, amounting among wealthy men to as many as ten thousand head of animals,[17] hire the pasture ground from the Khevsurs and in other suitable places. Every member of the community in Pshavia,[18] had a right to use, after harvest, the arable land as pasture for his herds in the territory of the whole community. The pasture grounds of the Tushes represented a joint property of communities.[19]

The forests are situated in the territory of the people, as, for example, the forest on the banks of the River Alazani in Tushetia, called *otkhi thvali* (meaning "four eyes"). This forest was bought with the money of all Pshav communities, and represented the national property.[20] Upon the ownership of the forest depended the method of acquiring the arable land by the so-called *akho* (ownership by seizure), which allowed every member of the community to clear the land and cultivate it for his own benefit, without asking special permission from anybody for this action, and this portion of cleared land was regarded as his own property as long as he cultivated it. However, with the introduction of Russian rule in the Caucasus, a great portion of the forest was claimed for the Crown, and proclaimed as the property of the Imperial Government. The consequence of this was that it put an end to the ancient method of acquiring landed property by

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[17] Zisserman: 233.
[18] Machabeli: V, 386.
[19] Khakhanov: a, 43.
[20] *Ibid.*

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seizure (*akho*). New clearings were forbidden by the government and, if made, were done so only by special permission of the authorities.

Most forests were the property of the Church. Almost every investigator or mere traveler who has visited the country of the Georgian Highlanders describes the rich virgin forests belonging to the Church. We have already mentioned such forests in Svanetia,[21] as described by Bartolomei[22] and Bakradze.[23] The same situation was found among the Khevsurs. The forests representing Church property are called by the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, *sakhato* forests, and they are usually situated around the sanctuaries or not far from them. Such forests are very easily recognized by their large old trees. No one is permitted to approach these trees or to break off their branches.

Besides the forests, the Church property consists of arable land, vineyards, flocks of sheep, and church utensils and vessels.

All members of every community are members of the local sanctuary, the arable land, and pasture grounds (*sakhato mitsebi,* of property." The property of the sanctuary (*khati*) is called *sakhato,* and consists of different buildings representing the sanctuary, the arable land, and pasture grounds (*sakhato mitsebi,* meaning "church lands"). Besides the above-mentioned property of the *khati,* there are also silver and copper vessels and utensils necessary in the brewing of beer, called *ludi,* and for church festivals. All the property of the *khati* is regarded as common property of all the *mogantsuri.* The supervision and care of the church property is entrusted to the attendants of the sanctuary—*dekanozi, khutsi, dasturi,* and others.

Almost every sanctuary in Khevsuria and Pshavia possessed large copper pots, valued at from one hundred to two hundred rubles, and used for brewing beer from barley.[24] Some sanctuaries possessed silver vessels of different form and size, with the names of the donors inscribed on them, and worth from one to

[21] See Chapter III.
[22] Bartolomei: 151-3.
[23] Bakradze: 51.
[24] Eristov: 99.